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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: PRT SALAH AD-DIN: SAD VOTER REGISTRATION GOING
SMOOTHLY BUT VOTERS UNINFORMED

Classified By: Deputy Political Counselor Greg D'Elia for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

This is a PRT Salah ad Din reporting cable.

Summary

¶1. (C) Voter registration in Salah ad Din (SaD) is proceeding smoothly, but many other SaD residents are uninformed about the elections and not aware that voter registration is taking place. SaD Governorate Electoral Officer (GEO) informed PRT members on August 18. The GEO believed many people who had boycotted previous elections are now energized to vote, with Sunni interest stronger than Shi'a interest. He said Samarra ranks as the top city for voter registration in all Iraq, with figures exceeding 40,000. He believes that elections will still be held this year. End summary.

Smooth Sailing at VRCs

¶2. (C) SaD Governorate Electoral Officer (GEO) Dr. Hatim Abdulhamid (strictly protect) told PRT members in an August 18 meeting that voter registration is proceeding smoothly, and that there have been no reported incidents of violence or intimidation at the Voter Registration Centers (VRCs) or against potential voters. Dr. Hatim said that he is receiving good cooperation from the ISF with 10 Iraqi Police (IP) on hand at each VRC. He said that no significant public complaints have been received (there were two complaints about insufficient electricity at the VRCs which were resolved with the placement of generators at those VRCs).

¶3. (C) Dr. Hatim told the PRT that voter registration has been extended beyond the August 15 deadline until the August 21. (Note: The Independent High Electoral Commission recently extended voter registration until August 28. End Note.) As of August 17, 111,101 potential SaD voters have visited the VRCs to verify voter information for themselves and their families. Dr. Hatim said he had not heard of any government officials or other leaders organizing their followers to visit the VRCs as a group.

SaD Public Generally Uninformed

¶4. (C) Dr. Hatim said that many SaD residents are uninformed about the elections and are not aware that voter registration is taking place. He said that many cannot distinguish between voting centers and VRCs and are not familiar with the whole elections process. Dr. Hatim said four local NGOs have been funded by UNOPS, but only two of them -- Organization of Iraqi Family and Hammurabi Organization to monitor human rights and democracy -- are making any efforts to educate potential voters. He said the other two NGOs -- Al-Rawafid Cultural Association and Lawyers Association in Salah ad Din -- have not done anything. Samarra, Al-Dawr and Balad, where the two active NGOs are working, have seen the most registrants. He described the NGOs, outreach efforts as

relying on seminars and workshops to educate the public. Due to security concerns, the seminars are not advertised to the public; invitations are given to specific organizations such as businesses or social groups. Although from a security perspective, these types of non-public seminars are safer, they also limit the NGOs, ability to conduct a wide reaching campaign. This limitation is certainly one factor behind insufficient public awareness. Another factor is that the use wide-reaching media such as TV and radio was minimal at best, primarily because it is considered too expensive. Dr. Hatim noted that although the outreach campaign was limited in scope, it was effective for those it reached. He said that many potential voters who seemed indifferent to the elections left the seminars with a strong desire to participate in the elections process.

Former Boycotters Now Interested

15. (C) Dr. Hatim said he had noticed that many people who had boycotted previous elections were now quite energized to vote. He surmised that experience of the consequences of not voting (and thus having no political representation) had been an important factor in increasing the political engagement of former boycotters. Dr. Hatim said the general trend he is noticing is that Sunnis in SaD are more interested in voting this time, while Shi'a voters seem more apathetic, with Samarra a case in point. Samarra, with one of the worst security situations in the country, was a source of much concern for election preparations. Remarkably, Samarra ranked as the top city in of Iraq for voter registration numbers with over 40,000 voters registered.

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GEO Believes Elections Likely This Year

16. (C) When asked his opinion on when elections will be held, Hatim replied that the official answer is December 22. He said he still believes this goal can be met as long as the Provincial Elections law is passed in time. He noted that if the elections are delayed until next year, a generation of new voters will come of age, which would require another registration process. He added that this was only speculation and that the CoR had the ability to avoid this dilemma by creating new voting age rules for this election. He added that it is "not clear" and "even the CoR doesn't know" what the complications would be if elections are not held this year.

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